

Remarks of Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.
Independence Day Celebration

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, President Fidel V. Ramos, Secretary Romulo,
Archbishop Adams, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Magandang gabi sa inyong lahat.

I am delighted to welcome you to the U.S. Embassy as we celebrate Independence Day and Philippine-American Friendship Day. I would also like to thank our generous sponsors who made this reception possible.

In the United States, every year on July 4, Americans reflect upon our great leaders who, despite their differences and rivalries, came together for the common good of a great nation. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison – all men of strong will and great vision – looked forward, not back. They sacrificed their lives, fortunes and sacred honors to lay the foundations for a new country but ours was not a perfect union as it took trials and tribulations to bring justice to all. What I am most proud of is that we continue to evolve, experiment and offer opportunities to the global community.

In the Philippines, every year on July 4, we recognize the historic friendship between our two nations that was forged in the past but always looks ahead. We honor Filipinos who dreamed of and fought for independence. We salute Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Teresa Magbanua, Melchora Aquino and all who knew that freedom while deferred would come. Tonight we have highlighted some of the strongest pillars of our friendship. You will hear our Peace Corps volunteers sing the U.S. national anthem. They represent one of our longest and most heartfelt friendship exchanges. In the courtyard you will see photographs of the many projects made possible by our friendship with Philippine partners. You can also see photographs

of the great social responsibility outreach initiated by U.S. business, another great friend of the Philippines. My goal as Ambassador is to broaden our community of friendship with Filipinos.

There is no better time than now. Yesterday, the Philippines celebrated the joyous inauguration of a new president, a new vice president, and a new vision for the future. I was inspired by the energy, the enthusiasm, the hope that surrounded the stadium and filled the streets of Manila. Great things are possible, but hard work lies ahead. We stand ready, as a friend, to assist.

In closing, I would like to applaud President Ramos for your role sir in returning democracy to the Philippines, commend President Arroyo for your courageous stand to support free nations opposed to terror and propose a toast to His Excellency President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III and the enduring friendship between our two countries – may it flourish forever.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas at ang Amerika.